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state's long-term commitment to operate and manage the Reserve.

(b) The state is eligible to use the funds referenced in § 921.12(a) after the proposed site is approved by NOAA under the terms of § 921.11.

§ 921.13 Management plan and environmental impact statement development.

(a) After NOAA approves the state's proposed site and application for funds submitted pursuant to § 921.12, the state may begin draft management plan development and the collection of information necessary for the preparation by NOAA of an EIS. The state shall develop a draft management plan, including an MOU. The plan shall set out in detail:

(1) Reserve goals and objectives, management issues, and strategies or actions for meeting the goals and objectives;

(2) An administrative plan including staff roles in administration, research, education/interpretation, and surveillance and enforcement;

(3) A research plan, including a monitoring design;

(4) An education/interpretive plan;

(5) A plan for public access to the Reserve;

(6) A construction plan, including a proposed construction schedule, general descriptions of proposed developments and general cost estimates. Information should be provided for proposed minor construction projects in sufficient detail to allow these projects to begin in the initial phase of acquisition and development. A categorical exclusion, environmental assessment, or EIS may be required prior to construction;

(7)(i) An acquisition plan identifying the ecologically key land and water areas of the Reserve, ranking these areas according to their relative importance, and including a strategy for establishing adequate long-term state control over these areas sufficient to provide protection for Reserve resources to ensure a stable environment for research. This plan must include an identification of ownership within the proposed Reserve boundaries, including land already in the public domain; the method(s) of acquisition which the

state proposes to use—acquisition (including less-than-fee simple options) to establish adequate long-term state control; an estimate of the fair market value of any property interest—which is proposed for acquisition; a schedule estimating the time required to complete the process of establishing adequate state control of the proposed research reserve; and a discussion of any anticipated problems. In selecting a preferred method(s) for establishing adequate state control over areas within the proposed boundaries of the Reserve, the state shall perform the following steps for each parcel determined to be part of the key land and water areas (control over which is necessary to protect the integrity of the Reserve for research purposes), and for those parcels required for research and interpretive support facilities or buffer purposes:

(A) Determine, with appropriate justification, the minimum level of control(s) required [e.g., management agreement, regulation, less-than-fee simple property interest (e.g., conservation easement), fee simple property acquisition, or a combination of these approaches]. This does not preclude the future necessity of increasing the level of state control;

(B) Identify the level of existing state control(s);

(C) Identify the level of additional state control(s), if any, necessary to meet the minimum requirements identified in paragraph (a)(7)(i)(A) of this section;

(D) Examine all reasonable alternatives for attaining the level of control identified in paragraph (a)(7)(i)(C) of this section, and perform a cost analysis of each; and

(E) Rank, in order of cost, the methods (including acquisition) identified in paragraph (a)(7)(i)(D) of this section.

(ii) An assessment of the relative cost-effectiveness of control alternatives shall include a reasonable estimate of both short-term costs (e.g., acquisition of property interests, regulatory program development including associated enforcement costs, negotiation, adjudication, etc.) and long-term costs (e.g., monitoring, enforcement,

adjudication, management and coordination). In selecting a preferred method(s) for establishing adequate state control over each parcel examined under the process described above, the state shall give priority consideration to the least costly method(s) of attaining the minimum level of long-term control required. Generally, with the possible exception of buffer areas required for support facilities, the level of control(s) required for buffer areas will be considerably less than that required for key land and water areas. This acquisition plan, after receiving the approval of NOAA, shall serve as a guide for negotiations with landowners. A final boundary for the reserve shall be delineated as a part of the final management plan;

(8) A resource protection plan detailing applicable authorities, including allowable uses, uses requiring a permit and permit requirements, any restrictions on use of the research reserve, and a strategy for research reserve surveillance and enforcement of such use restrictions, including appropriate government enforcement agencies;

(9) If applicable, a restoration plan describing those portions of the site that may require habitat modification to restore natural conditions;

(10) If applicable, a resource manipulation plan, describing those portions of the Reserve buffer in which long-term pre-existing (prior to designation) manipulation for reasons not related to research or restoration is occurring. The plan shall explain in detail the nature of such activities, shall justify why such manipulation should be permitted to continue within the reserve buffer; and shall describe possible effects of this manipulation on key land and water areas and their resources;

(11) A proposed memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the state and NOAA regarding the Federal-state relationship during the establishment and development of the National Estuarine Research Reserve, and expressing a long-term commitment by the state to maintain and manage the Reserve in accordance with section 315 of the Act, 16 U.S.C. 1461, and applicable regulations. In conjunction with the MOU, and where possible under state law, the state will consider taking appropriate

administrative or legislative action to ensure the long-term protection and operation of the National Estuarine Research Reserve. If other MOUs are necessary (such as with a Federal agency, another state agency or private organization), drafts of such MOUs must be included in the plan. All necessary MOU's shall be signed prior to Reserve designation; and

(12) If the state has a federally approved coastal management program, a certification that the National Estuarine Research Reserve is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with that program. See §§921.4(b) and 921.30(b).

(b) Regarding the preparation of an EIS under the National Environmental Policy Act on a National Estuarine Research Reserve proposal, the state and NOAA shall collect all necessary information concerning the socioeconomic and environmental impacts associated with implementing the draft management plan and feasible alternatives to the plan. Based on this information, the state will draft and provide NOAA with a preliminary EIS.

(c) Early in the development of the draft management plan and the draft EIS, the state and NOAA shall hold a scoping meeting (pursuant to NEPA) in the area or areas most affected to solicit public and government comments on the significant issues related to the proposed action. NOAA will publish a notice of the meeting in the FEDERAL REGISTER at least 15 days prior to the meeting. The state shall be responsible for publishing a similar notice in the local media.

(d) NOAA will publish a FEDERAL REGISTER notice of intent to prepare a draft EIS. After the draft EIS is prepared and filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), a Notice of Availability of the draft EIS will appear in the FEDERAL REGISTER. Not less than 30 days after publication of the notice, NOAA will hold at least one public hearing in the area or areas most affected by the proposed national estuarine research reserve. The hearing will be held no sooner than 15 days after appropriate notice of the meeting has been given in the principal news media by the state and in the FEDERAL REGISTER by NOAA. After a 45-day

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comment period, a final EIS will be prepared by the state and NOAA.

Subpart C—Acquisition, Development and Preparation of the Final Management Plan

§ 921.20 General.

The acquisition and development period is separated into two major phases. After NOAA approval of the site, draft management plan and draft MOU, and completion of the final EIS, a coastal state is eligible for an initial acquisition and development award(s). In this initial phase, the state should work to meet the criteria required for formal research reserve designation; *e.g.*, establishing adequate state control over the key land and water areas as specified in the draft management plan and preparing the final management plan. These requirements are specified in § 921.30. Minor construction in accordance with the draft management plan may also be conducted during this initial phase. The initial acquisition and development phase is expected to last no longer than three years. If necessary, a longer time period may be negotiated between the state and NOAA. After Reserve designation, a state is eligible for a supplemental acquisition and development award(s) in accordance with § 921.31. In this post-designation acquisition and development phase, funds may be used in accordance with the final management plan to construct research and educational facilities, complete any remaining land acquisition, for program development, and for restorative activities identified in the final management plan. In any case, the amount of Federal financial assistance provided to a coastal state with respect to the acquisition of lands and waters, or interests therein, for any one National Estuarine Research Reserve may not exceed an amount equal to 50 percent of the costs of the lands, waters, and interests therein or \$5,000,000, whichever amount is less, except when the financial assistance is provided from amounts recovered as a result of damage to natural resources located in the coastal zone, in which case the assistance may be used to pay 100 percent of all actual costs of activities carried out

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with this assistance, as long as such funds are available.

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§ 921.21 Initial acquisition and development awards.

(a) Assistance is provided to aid the recipient prior to designation in:

(1) Acquiring a fee simple or less-than-fee simple real property interest in land and water areas to be included in the Reserve boundaries (see § 921.13(a)(7); § 921.30(d));

(2) Minor construction, as provided in paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section;

(3) Preparing the final management plan; and

(4) Initial management costs, *e.g.*, for implementing the NOAA approved draft management plan, hiring a Reserve manager and other staff as necessary and for other management-related activities. Application procedures are specified in subpart I.

(b) The expenditure of Federal and state funds on major construction activities is not allowed during the initial acquisition and development phase. The preparation of architectural and engineering plans, including specifications, for any proposed construction, or for proposed restorative activities, is permitted. In addition, minor construction activities, consistent with paragraph (c) of this section also are allowed. The NOAA-approved draft management plan must, however, include a construction plan and a public access plan before any award funds can be spent on construction activities.

(c) Only minor construction activities that aid in implementing portions of the management plan (such as boat ramps and nature trails) are permitted during the initial acquisition and development phase. No more than five (5) percent of the initial acquisition and development award may be expended on such activities. NOAA must make a specific determination, based on the final EIS, that the construction activity will not be detrimental to the environment.